

What does it mean to be a Caregiver?

Caregiving is the act of providing assistance to a person who is not able to fully care for themselves. Family caregiving (the act of providing care services to a family member) is relied upon heavily in the United States and is expected by the medical community.

In the United States, more than 22 million persons are providing informal caregiver services to an elder friend or family member. The caregiver services primarily go unpaid and can be significantly time consuming, and often overwhelming. Caregivers provide nearly \$306 billion dollars a year in services for the persons they are caring for.

Caregivers are very diverse in the roles they fill, how they fill them, and where they fill them. They provide services to elders, grandchildren, and disabled persons in long-distance capacities, to persons they live with and to persons that live nearby. These services include but are not limited to transportation, shopping, healthcare, cooking, feeding, bathing, dressing, homemaking, lifting, toileting, financial management and supervision. Most of these caregivers also have their own family obligations and are employed outside of the home. Some care for more than one person.

The Older Americans Act mandated caregiver support in all states. The act requires family caregivers to be provided with five basic services:

- Information to caregivers about available services
- Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services
- Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training to caregivers to assist the caregivers in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiving roles
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities
- Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers

The statute requires states to give priority to caregivers with the greatest social and economic needs and to older individuals providing care and support to persons with severe disabilities, including children with severe disabilities. Many caregivers are unaware that these types of services are available to them. Caregivers often do not ask for or expect help, but they desperately need it.

Wyoming Issues Increasing Reliance on Caregivers

Wyoming is one of the fastest aging states in the nation. Currently studies and statistics indicate that



Wyoming will be second or third in the nation in the next twenty years for the percentage of adults over age sixty-five. Other studies also indicate that Wyoming will have a very high concentration in the number of persons with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. Persons with these conditions, and other health conditions associated with aging, often rely on caregivers to assist with normal and instrumental activities of daily living, including, but not limited to, bathing, eating, dressing, household chores, managing finances, shopping and transportation. As most caregivers are performing these same activities for themselves and their own families, while trying to maintain their own professional and personal obligations, the burden can be significant. Wyoming's rural nature, as well as shortages of healthcare professionals and providers, will continue to impact and increase the reliance on caregivers.

Caregiving takes a toll on the Caregiver

Research indicates that the physical and emotional demands on caregivers put them at greater risk for depression and illness. Caregivers risk contracting infectious diseases such as cold and flu, and suffer from chronic diseases such as heart problems, diabetes and cancer. Caregivers are twice as likely to suffer from depression as non-caregivers.

Caregiver Statistics and Information

- A 2006 survey found that 26 % of respondents in Wyoming were providing caregiving services to a person over the age of 60.
- 78% of persons receiving long-term care at home get all of their care from unpaid family and friends.
- On average, caregivers provide 21 hours of care per week.
- The most frequently reported unmet need of caregivers is finding time for themselves.
- The value of services family caregivers provide without payment is estimated to be at \$306 billion a year nationally.
- Family caregiving represents 80% of all home care services.
- Caregivers have higher mortality rates than non-caregivers in the same age group.
- Caregivers often neglect their own care.
- Women who are family caregivers are 2.5 times more likely to live in poverty than non-caregivers.
- Women who are family caregivers are 5 times more likely to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) than non-caregivers.
- The need for family caregivers will increase. Persons over 65 are anticipated to increase at a rate of 2.3%. Family members available to care for this increasing population will only increase at 0.8%.
- 1.4 million children between the ages of 8 and 18 provide care for an adult relative.
- 30% of family caregivers are 65 years of age and over themselves.

Relationship to Elder	% of All Caregivers caring for Elder 65 +
Child	41%
Spouse	23%
Other Relative	27%
Nonrelatives	8%



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Policy Recommendations

Caregivers need support. They need access to information. They need access to resources. Without the support of caregivers, 80% of the long term care in our country would cease, resulting in an extraordinary burden on our medical community and the inability to care for persons that are in need.

Recommendations:

- Promote Information and Referral services – Provide information on available sources of information and consumer directed care options including allowing family members to be compensated for providing care
- Support initiatives like the Aging and Disability Resource Center – thus providing a standard contact for information
- Provide financial support to alleviate the economic stress of ongoing care
- Promote Caregiver Physical wellness activities – Health and wellness, Disease education, Stress education
- Increase funding to support case management – Assessing needs, developing care plans, authorizing services, arranging services, coordinating the provision of services among providers, follow-up and reassessment as required
- Advocate for and fund Adult Day Care services in Wyoming communities
- Advocate for and fund services for persons with Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias
- Foster the development and delivery of caregiver assessment tools across care settings (i.e., for use in health care facilities, home care situations and community-based agencies) in order to develop effective support plans
- Promote Emotional support – Support Groups, Individual Counseling
- Promote and Support Caregiver outreach activities (many caregivers do not realize that they are caregivers or the strain that they are under)
- Support day transportation sources for those being cared for to attend medical examinations, etc.
- Require assessment of caregiver needs as well as patient needs at the time of hospital discharge; provide appropriate caregiver training to ensure a safe transition from hospital to home. Involve the caregiver in the discharge planning for the patient.
- Encourage primary care interventions to address caregiver health.
- Advocate for continued health insurance benefits for caregivers forced to leave employment or during leaves of absence resulting from caregiving duties
- Provide education and support programs for caregivers – Caregiver basics, Personal care for the caregiver, End of life issues, Government resources, Legal issues and decision-making resources, Checklists and forms, Housing issues, Long distance care, Financial issues, Degenerative illness
- Increase funding for respite to reduce caregiver burden - Temporary, substitute support, or living arrangements for older persons in order to provide a brief period of relief or rest for family members or other caregivers
- Support state initiatives to assist caregivers with tax relief and increased public awareness about existing policies and programs benefiting caregivers

Resources for Caregivers

The Wyoming Department of Health, Aging Division, provides access to Community Based In Home Services that benefit caregivers. Information on services available can be obtained by contacting our office at 307-777-7986.

Other resources for caregivers include:

- National Family Caregiver Support Program: <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/caregiver.aspx>
- National Family Caregivers Association: <http://www.nfca.org/>
- Family Caregiver Alliance: <http://www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/home.jsp>
- AARP – Connecting Caregivers: <http://www.aarp.org/family/caregiving/>
- Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving: <http://rci.gsw.edu/home.htm>
- Connect Wyoming: <http://www.uwyo.edu/wind/connect/default.asp>
- Caregiver Stress: <http://www.caregiverstress.com/>
- Women’s Health: <http://www.4woman.gov/FAQ/caregiver.htm>



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